

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 142616

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, MR

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: MAURITANIA ACTION PLAN

REF: STATE 139160

1. THE GEOGRAPHIC BUREAUS HAVE BEEN TASKED TO PREPARE HUMAN RIGHTS EVALUATION REPORTS INCLUDING AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN EACH COUNTRY AND THE PROPOSED OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THESE CONDITIONS.

2. THIS CABLE TRANSMITS THE DESK'S DRAFT REPORT FOR YOUR COMMENTS. YOUR RESPONSE IS REQUESTED BY JUNE 28 SO THAT THE BUREAU CAN MEET THE SUBMISSION DATE OF JULY 1. SLUG FOR AF DISTRIBUTION ONLY.

3. THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE COUNTRY EVALUATION WILL BE CLASSIFIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXECUTIVE ORDER CONFIDENTIAL

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11652. REPORTS WILL BE USED AS SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THE PREPARATION OF ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS ON ALL COUNTRIES WHICH ARE RECIPIENTS OF US SECURITY ASSISTANCE, AND WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS COORDINATING COMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY THE DEPUTY SECRETARY.

4. A. CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN MAURITANIA
(1) RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON.

MAURITANIA'S CONSTITUTION REFLECTS BOTH THE FRENCH

DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT, DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL, AND INVASION OF THE HOME ARE PROHIBITED BY LAW AND ARE NOT PRACTICED.

(2) RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES.

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, RELIGION, AND ASSEMBLY ARE PROTECTED. ALTHOUGH THE MAURITANIAN CONSTITUTION PROCLAIMS ISLAM TO BE THE RELIGION OF THE MAURITANIAN PEOPLE, THE CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES "FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND THE RIGHT TO PRACTICE ONE'S RELIGION." NON-MOSLEMS HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTIES IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF MAURITANIA.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IS ALLOWED WITHIN MAURITANIA, SUBJECT TO THE SECURITY RESTRICTIONS ARISING AS A RESULT OF POLISARIO GUERRILLA MILITARY ACTIVITY IN SOME AREAS. FOREIGN TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION ARE NOT RESTRICTED.

MAURITANIA RESPECTS GENERALLY IN WORD AND FUNDAMENTALLY IN DEED THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ITS CITIZENS, IN SPITE OF
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THE INTERNAL SECURITY MEASURES REFERRED TO ABOVE. BY AN AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF DECEMBER 25, 1961, THE MAURITANIAN PEOPLES PARTY BECAME THE SOLE LEGAL POLITICAL PARTY IN MAURITANIA. AS A RESULT, PERSONS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED FROM TIME TO TIME FOR PARTICIPATING IN ILLEGAL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. SUCH ARRESTS HAVE BEEN INFREQUENT, AND AT PRESENT THERE ARE NO POLITICAL PRISONERS OR DETAINEES. THIRTY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ADOPTEES BENEFITED FROM A 1975 GENERAL AMNESTY. THERE ARE SOME SUSPECTED POLISARIO ADHERENTS UNDER DETENTION. THE ONE-PARTY REGIME IS CONTROLLED BY PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH, WHO IN FACT GOVERNS BY CONSENSUS IN THE TRIBAL TRADITION IMPOSED BY MAURITANIA'S ARAB AND AFRICAN HERITAGES.

(3) RECENT TRENDS IN GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION.

MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES ARE DESIGNED TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE POOR -- THE SEDENTARY AGRICULTURAL AND WIDELY DISPERSED NOMADIC PEOPLES WHICH MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION. THERE ARE NO OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES WHICH TEND TO IGNORE THE NEEDS OF THE POOR. THERE HAS BEEN EVIDENCE RECENTLY OF CORRUPTION IN THE FINANCE MINISTRY, BUT THE GOVERNMENT MOVED PROMPTLY TO ARREST THE OFFENDERS. CORRUPTION IS NOT OF SUCH A NATURE

THAT SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES ARE DIVERTED TOWARD THE NATION'S ELITES AND AWAY FROM THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION.

(4) LEVEL OF THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FOREGOING HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD, INCLUDING THE EXTENT TO WHICH POSITIVE HUMAN RIGHTS MEASURES ARE ARTICULATED AS PUBLIC POLICY OR VIOLATIONS CONDONED BECAUSE OF SECURITY OR OTHER JUSTIFICATIONS.

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THE GOVERNMENT OF MAURITANIA PUBLICLY PROCLAIMS SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THIS IS REFLECTED IN LAWS, CUSTOM, AND PRACTICE.

INCREASED SECURITY MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO THE CONTINUING GUERRILLA WAR MAY HAVE INFRINGED TO A DEGREE ON THE RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OF CITIZENS. THE POLISARIO ATTACK ON THE CAPITAL OF NOUAKCHOTT IN JUNE, 1976, LED TO THE ARREST AND DETENTION OF SUSPECTED POLISARIO SUPPORTERS AND SYMPATHIZERS. THE NUMBERS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN MODEST, AND THE DETENTIONS WERE BRIEF -- MOST BEING RELEASED IN FOUR TO FIVE DAYS. OUR EMBASSY HAS DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF OPPONENTS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S SAHARA POLICIES WHO HAVE FREELY VOICED THEIR OPPOSITION TO THESE POLICIES IN SMALL GROUPS IN PRIVATE (AND IN ONE CASE IN A PUBLIC MEETING) WITHOUT HINDERANCE OR RETIRBUTION.

(5) WILLINGNESS AND PAST RECORD OF THE GOVERNMENT REGARDING INDEPENDENT, OUTSIDE INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.

THERE HAVE BEEN NO INVESTIGATIONS BY INDEPENDENT OUTSIDE AUTHORITIES IN MAURITANIA. NO INTERNATIONAL CONCERN HAS BEEN EXPRESSED CONCERNING MAURITANIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES. THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ADOPTEES, AS REFERRED TO ABOVE, WERE RELEASED IN 1975.

5. B. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) LEGITIMATE OBJECTIVES OVER THE NEXT THREE, SIX, TWELVE MONTHS IN RELATION TO IMPROVING CONDITIONS IN MAURITANIA, WITH RESPECT TO CATEGORIES A 1, 2, AND 3 ABOVE.

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MAURITANIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IS GENERALLY SATISFACTORY. WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO PROMOTE USG HUMAN RIGHTS INTEREST AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT. WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE MAURITANIA'S CONTINUED COMMENDABLE

ADHERENCE TO ITS OWN LAWS REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS. WHILE CONTINUING TO URGE CAREFUL ATTENTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES, WE SHOULD ALSO INDICATE THAT WE ARE AWARE OF MAURITANIA'S GENERALLY LAUDATORY PERFORMANCE IN AVOIDING REPRESSION WHILE BECOMING MORE DEEPLY ENGAGED IN FENDING OFF POLISARIO GUERRILLA INTRUSIONS AND ATTACKS.

(2) PRINCIPAL REACTIONS IN MAURITANIA TO THE NEW U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES AND EMBASSY ACTIONS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THOSE POLICIES, INCLUDING REACTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT, OPPOSITION LEADERS, CHURCH AND THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PRIVATE AND INTELLECTUAL GROUPS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

(TO BE COMPLETED BY POST)

(3) EVALUATE REACTIONS IN 2 ABOVE IN TERMS OF THE IMPLICATIONS FOR POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CHANGES IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS.

(TO BE COMPLETED BY POST)

(4) (A) WHERE A HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD JUSTIFIES U.S. ACTIONS, EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF THOSE ACTIONS ON OTHER U.S. INTERESTS IN THAT COUNTRY.

NOT APPLICABLE

(B) WHERE THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IS GOOD OR ENCOURAGING, INDICATE THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE HOST GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORTING U.S. EFFORTS TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS.

MAURITANIA SUPPORTS U.S. EFFORTS TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS, AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO DO SO -- PARTICULARLY IF THE USG INDICATES ITS APPRECIATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S HARD-PRESSED EFFORTS TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS WHILE DEFENDING ITS CAPITAL CITY, MAJOR ECONOMIC COMPLEXES, AND OUTLYING TOWNS FROM ARMED GUERRILLA ATTACK.

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